

Message Text

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ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 /056 W

----- 009990

R 160912Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1273

INFO CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 0871

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, RP

SUBJECT: MORE FROM MARCOS ON NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

REF: MANILA 0659

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT MARCOS ADDED TO SPECULATION ON ESTABLISHMENT OF "NATIONAL ASSEMBLY" IN REMARKS TO PRESS JAN 14 AT INAUGURATION OF MEMORIAL TO JAPANESE WAR DEAD, INDICATING PREFERENCE FOR A LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COUNCIL. PREFERENCE CONSISTENT WITH PREVIOUS REMARKS BUT IS CONSISTENTLY OPPOSED BY OTHERS AS UNCONSTITUTIONAL INCLUDING, MOST RECENTLY, BY EX-PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL. EMBASSY NOT AWARE OF ANY STRONG PUBLIC DESIRE FOR REPRESENTATIVE BODY AND ASSUME PRIMARY INTEREST DERIVED FROM PRESIDENT'S DESIRE IMPROVE INTERNATIONAL IMAGE. ALTHOUGH HE HAS MOVED THIS DIRECTION BEFORE, HE HAS ALWAYS BACKED OFF BECAUSE OF DISTAST FOR HAVING TO DEAL WITH ANOTHER CONGRESS. NO TELLING WHERE HE WILL GO THIS TIME BUT IF ANYTHING IS CREATED IT WILL BE PURELY PRO FORMA. END SUMMARY.

1. DURING BRIEF SESSION WITH NEWSMEN JAN 14, PRESIDENT MARCOS WAS ASKED TO CLARIFY HIS RECENT REMARKS (REFTEL) ON RELATIONSHIP OF SANGGUNIANG BAYANS AND NATIONAL CONFIDENTIAL

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ASSEMBLY (SANGGANIANG PAMBANSA) AND SPECIFICALLY WHETHER

ASSEMBLY HE HAD REFERRED TO WAS SAME ONE CONTEMPLATED IN CONSTITUTION. PRESIDENT REPLIED: "WE WILL HAVE TO DECIDE THIS DEPENDING ON WHETHER WE MOVE FIRST INTO THE PHASE KNOWN AS THE LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COUNCIL WHICH AS YOU KNOW IS THE DECISION OF THE PEOPLE IN THE REFERENDUM IN JULY 1973." MARCOS REITERATED HIS INTENTION TO FORM A SANGGUNIANG PAMBANSA AND ADDED ITS MEMBERSHIP WOULD BE DRAWN FROM MUNICIPAL, CITY AND PROVINCIAL SANGGUNIANG AND MIGHT ALSO INCLUDE CABINET MEMBERS.

2. JAN 15 BULLETIN TODAY SPECULATES THAT THE "LIKELIHOOD" IS THAT SANGGUNIANG PAMBANSA IS LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COUNCIL WHICH WILL SERVE AS TRANSITIONAL NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PRIOR TO ELECTION OF MEMBERS OF NATIONAL ASSEMBLY AS PROVIDED IN 1973 CONSTITUTION. JAN 15 EXPRESS WISELY FORBEARS INTERPRETATION BUT LEAD EDITORIAL SUGGESTS "SIGNS ARE UNMISTAKABLE" THAT MARCOS THINKING OF CARRYING OUT THE TRANSITION TO PARLIAMENTARY GOVERNMENT. EDITORIAL EMPHASIZES IT IS TIME FOR PEOPLE TO SHARE IN THE BURDEN OF BUILDING NEW SOCIETY NOT ONLY THROUGH BARANGAY AND SANGGUNIANG BAYAN BUT THROUGH NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.

3. COMMENT: THERE IS NO PROVISION IN CONSTITUTION FOR LEGISLATIVE ADVISORY COUNCIL NOR ACCORDING TO OUR RECORDS WAS THERE EVEN FORMAL QUESTION TO NATION IN JULY 1973 REFERENDUM ON ADVISABILITY OF CONVENING LAC. BUT THE PRESIDENT HAS CONSISTENTLY REFERRED TO THE LAC AS HIS DESIRED FIRST STEP TOWARDS SOME FORM OF NATIONAL REPRESENTATIVE BODY. FORMER POLITICAL OPPOSITION HAS EQUALLY CONSISTENTLY REJECTED CONCEPT OF LAC AS UNCONSTITUTIONAL AND UNREPRESENTATIVE. IN HIS RECENT LETTER, FORMER PRESIDENT MACAPAGAL (AND PRESIDENT OF CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION) SAID "THE ADVISORY LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL BRUIED ABOUT IN LIEU OF THE INTERIM ASSEMBLY, APART FROM BEING UNCONSTITUTIONAL, IS INADEQUATE TO MEET THE NEED FOR LEGISLATIVE BODY AND THE VITAL INTEREST OF THE POEPLER."

4. SO FAR AS WE CAN SENSE, THERE IS NO GENERAL DESIRE
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FOR ANOTHER CONGRESS, NATIONAL ASSEMBLY, LAC, OR ANY FORM OF REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT--AT LEAST IF IT WERE TO BE CREATED UNDER AEGIS AND, CONSEQUENTLY, CONTROL PF PRESIDENT. FORMER POLITICIANS AND SCATTERING OF OTHERS IN THE CHRUCH, UNIVERSITIES AND OTHER MIDDLE INCOME GROUPS ARE PRIMARY AGITATORS FOR GENUINE ADOPTION OF 1973 CONSTITUTION AND INTERIM NATIONAL ASSEMBLY PROVIDED FOR THEREIN AND EVEN AMONG THEM THERE

IS CONSIDERABLE DIVISION AS TO WHAT GOAL SHOULD BE.

5. PRINCIPAL MOTIVATION FOR PRESIDENT'S REFERENCES
AND, PERHAPS, ULTIMATE FORMATION OF SOMETHING LIKE LAC
IS HIS FEELING THAT PHILIPPINES NEEDS ONE FOR INTERNA-
TIONAL RESPECTABILITY. REFERENCES TO LAC HAVE IN
FACT FREQUENTLY SURFACED IN TALKS WITH FOREIGNERS,
MOST RECENT REFERENCE BEING TO EUROPEAN PARLIAMENTARIANS
AUGUST 1975. MARCOS MAY FEEL THAT IT WOULD BE DESIRABLE
TO HAVE SOMETHING IN BEING WHEN GOP HOSTS ASEAN
PARLIAMENTARIANS IN AUGUST 1976 AT WHICH TIME ASEAN
INTER-PARLIAMENTARY UNION WILL BE FORMALLY CONSTITUTED.
POSSIBLY MORE PERSUASIVE INTERNATIONAL FACTOR IS
OCTOBER IMF CONFERENCE SINCE GOP HAS BEEN ACUTELY
SENSITIVE TO INFLUENCES IN BANK AND COMMERCIAL CIRCLES
THAT PHILIPPINE CREDIT RATING WOULD BE IMPROVED IF IT
HAD SOME PERMANENT NATIONAL GOVERNMENT INSTITUTION TO
REPLACE OR SUBSTITUTE FOR ABOLISHED CONGRESS. MARCOS
HAS BEEN TALKING LAC FOR NEARLY THREE YEARS, HOWEVER,
AND EVERY TIME HE SEEMS ABOUT TO MOVE IN THAT DIRECTION
FOR FOREIGN POLICY REASONS, HE BACKS OFF FOR DOMESTIC
POLICY REASONS--BASICALLY A BELIEF THAT LAC WOULD SIMPLY
RETURN ABUSES OF OLD SOCIETY AND BE MORE TROUBLE THAN
ITS WORTH. NO TELLING NOW WHETHER MARCOS WILL REALLY
MOVE TOWARD LAC BUT IF HE DOES WE EXPECT IT WOULD BE
LITTLE MORE THAN RUBBER STAMP.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TEXT, PRESS COMMENTS, MEMBERSHIP, SPEECHES, CENTRAL LEGISLATURE
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 16 JAN 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: izenbei0
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976MANILA00871
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760018-0953
From: MANILA
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760150/aaaabsogg.tel
Line Count: 142
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 MANILA 659
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: izenbei0
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 07 JUN 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <07 JUN 2004 by greeneet>; APPROVED <27 SEP 2004 by izenbei0>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MORE FROM MARCOS ON NATIONAL ASSEMBLY
TAGS: PINT, RP, (MARCOS, FERDINAND)
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006